

From the Director

of the CDC National Immunization Program



*D*uring the course of 2002, the dedicated and skilled professionals in the world of immunization accomplished many successes—from working to keeping vaccine-preventable diseases at or near record low levels to helping prepare our country to quickly and effectively respond to a bioterrorism attack. The efforts of these dedicated professionals took place at

many levels—from national governments to states, cities, and communities—and in multiple places—from physicians' offices to local health departments to remote villages in developing countries. And at the heart of all these efforts was a common mission: to prevent disease, disability, and death in children and adults through the use of safe and effective vaccines.

As this report illustrates, there are many ways in which immunization programs and people provide a strong foundation from which to address new and emerging health-related challenges. On the global front, for instance, our worldwide efforts to eradicate polio from the face of the earth have fostered partnerships and collaborations and built and strengthened the public and private health resources of developing countries. These efforts have also demonstrated the importance of commitment and dedication when it comes to achieving continued and long-term success.

Today, on the global front, worldwide polio transmission is now confined to an ever smaller portion of the globe. Three World Health Organization regions, with a population of more than three billion people, are now polio-free. Though the challenge remains great, we still hope to eradicate this disease from the world by 2005. Importantly, we are also continuing to make great progress in our efforts against measles and rubella. Measles has been virtually eliminated from the western hemisphere, and rubella should soon follow.

Immunization programs and people have also built a strong foundation domestically for preventing disease and fostering healthy lives. This foundation uses high quality science and

research, private and public sector partnerships, active disease surveillance systems, responsive information management systems, multi-faceted training and education programs, and comprehensive communication efforts to educate parents, health care providers, senior citizens, and the general public about immunization recommendations—and encourage their adoption.

I am proud to say that, thanks to our strong foundation, we continue to keep immunization levels in the United States at or near record highs, and the number of cases of vaccine-preventable diseases at, or near, record lows. As a result, immunization programs across the country are improving the health and wellbeing of all Americans—from infants to senior citizens.

The past year has also illustrated how the foundation we have built in our nation's childhood immunization program is helping us address new health challenges. One of these new challenges is achieving higher adult immunization rates. In 2002, the first-ever adult immunization schedule was published, and a greater effort was made to use partnerships and collaborations to encourage annual influenza vaccination, especially among those over 65 years of age and those at high risk of complications.

Similarly, the foundation built to educate and encourage childhood immunizations was used to guide CDC, state, and community smallpox preparedness efforts—especially with respect to President Bush's recommendations for the use of smallpox vaccine. Throughout the country, as well as throughout CDC, many immunization program staff spent much of 2002 working on smallpox-related activities. Recommendations for use of smallpox vaccine were developed and refined, extensive training and education efforts were undertaken, and vaccine safety systems were developed and implemented.

For many of us, the past year has been one of the most demanding and professionally challenging. Fortunately, in many ways, it has also been one of the most rewarding. Thanks to your efforts and contributions, many more people are familiar with the term "public health" and better able to recognize our roles and contributions.

I thank you for your contributions—and I look forward to working with you in addressing the challenges ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walter A. Orenstein".

Walter A. Orenstein
Director, National Immunization Program